

MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL CONTACTS OF
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN LIVING IN A
SMALL TOWN OR RURAL AREA

by

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B.S., Kansas State University, 1964

A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements of the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1968

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author expresses deep appreciation to her graduate advisor, Dr. Marjorie Stith, Head of the Department of Family and Child Development, for her untiring assistance and guidance during the course of this study. Great appreciation and thanks are given to the author's husband, children, parents, and parents-in-law for their patience, understanding, encouragement and support. The cooperation of the mothers who participated in this study is gratefully acknowledged.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the country many thousands of organized preschool groups are in operation: nursery schools, day care centers, or play groups. Recently, emphasis has been placed on the establishment of such programs for disadvantaged preschool children. The program, Project Head Start, has received wide acceptance.

Many parents send a child to an organized preschool group because of the child's inability to share, his insistence on being the center of attention or similiar patterns of problem behavior which are seen by the parents as stemming from the child's lack of opportunity for social experience with other children. Other parents are primarily concerned with cognitive development and seek out groups where emphasis is placed on development of skills such as reading or writing.

Most of these organized preschool groups are located in large cities and are not usually available in small towns and rural areas. The investigator was familiar with farming communities and small towns in Northeast Kansas and had observed that rural families with children many times did not live near families with children of similiar age. The distance between rural homes of the preschool children influenced the contacts they had with children their own age.

Some mothers of preschool children living in a small town expressed to the investigator their desire for a nursery school or Head Start program. They wanted their children to spend more time with other children, especially children about the same age as their child.

Based on personal experiences as a mother of two preschool children and discussions with other mothers, the investigator hypothesized that preschool children living in small towns and rural areas were limited in number and kind of social contacts they had with children their own age. Child development research included little data on social contacts of preschool children and almost no data on preschool children living in small towns and rural areas.

This study was designed to describe the social contacts of preschool children living in a small town and rural area. The specific objectives were to study (1) the social contacts of children between $3\frac{1}{2}$ and $5\frac{1}{2}$ years of age living in a small town and rural area, (2) the mother's perception of her child's social contacts, (3) the mother's concern about her child's social contacts, and (4) her interest in community facilities for her preschool child.

CHAPTER I

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A child needs other children.
--Frazier, et al., 1962

Does a child really need other children? Are contacts with other children important in the development of preschoolers?

Havighurst (1952), in his development of the concept of developmental tasks of infancy and early childhood, stressed the importance of a child forming simple concepts of social and physical reality. Along with learning to walk and to talk, a child needs to learn to relate himself emotionally to parents, siblings and other people.

Duvall's (1962) developmental tasks of the preschool child includes the child achieving enough independence to be comfortable with his parents in a variety of situations. He must become reasonably self-sufficient both in the home and outside the home in relation to his particular stage of development.

Part of healthy personality development of a child, as described by Curry (1960), is the moving forward from the intense relationships with parents to develop less intense, but still meaningful relationships outside the family. The new relationships are with adults but more important, the child begins to enjoy children of his own age.

A child's activities in the company of other children, contended Campbell (1964), contributes to the child's developing picture of the

of the social world. These activities also help to establish his identity and provide him an opportunity for group experience relevant not only to present functioning but to future social relationships as well.

Six tasks of the preschool years were listed by Murphy (1962). The final task concerned the child becoming a member of his culture. The child needs to learn to deal with the deepest feeling and conflicts involved in relationships with the parent of each sex and with siblings and peers. He also needs to develop the ability to communicate and participate in play and work with other children or adults.

Studies indicate that a child's school adjustment may be related to the combined influences of his family and his preschool peer group. Bessard (1960) interviewed fifty people in regard to their childhood playmates and later school adjustment. One of the conclusions of the study was that isolation from age peers during preschool years was directly related to withdrawness and difficulty in relating to other children in the early school years. It was not just "only children" who attributed their lack of ease in early socialization to the absence of neighborhood playmates. The same sort of comment was made frequently by persons from larger families in cases where the siblings were widely separated in age and/or different sexes.

A study of social isolation and mental illness of adults made by Lantz (1956) revealed an even more critical relation between numbers of friends and mental hygiene. Though cause and effect was not clear, the cases having not mental disease ranked high in reporting many childhood friends, and low in reporting few or no friends.

Commenting on the need of preschool children for friends, Stolz (1941) stressed that only as each child felt that he belonged to the group and had a good friend or two among the children, could he gain emotional poise and social identification. Hilbert (1944) studied a selected group of sixteen nursery school children to observe the kinds of spontaneous friendly relationships exhibited. The opportunity for contacts with children at home or in the neighborhood influenced the friendliness of the group studied. Those children who had many opportunities for social relationships were among the friendliest members of the group.

Washburn and Hilgard (1934) concluded in their study of social behavior of children that the persistency of poor social techniques in many children was due to inexperience rather than inability to acquire the techniques if appropriate experiences were given.

Children differ markedly in the opportunities which they have to gain social experience with other children. Some children have contacts during the early years with many other children, both at home and in peer groups outside the home. Bossard (1960) suggested that the ages of the children in these peer groups may be the appropriate ones to stimulate the socializing process. On the other hand, there are children who are the only children in the family group and who have limited contacts over a period of years with other children of their own age.

Social scientific interest in and recognition of the importance of children's peer relationships dates back at least to the turn of the century. One of the earlier and still significant theorists is Charles H. Cooley (1955) who gave explicit recognition to the relevance of peer group processes in socialization.

Chronologically, peer groups take form early in the child's life. The exact time varies, both with the nature of the family situation and the availability of age-mates. Bossard (1960) stated that the process of moving away from the small world of the family to the engrossing world of one's fellows was usually under way before the child's fourth year.

Baller (1962) contended that a child is an active member of a peer group from the moment of his first contact with other children. However, Ausubel (1958) observed that peer group behavior begins when the child, unmonitored by adults, is permitted interact freely with his fellows.

Gessell and Ilg (1946), as well as Hurlock (1942) and others have shown that from somewhere between the third and fourth years children prefer to play in groups; that the size of the group depends on the age of the children, and that the size increases with age.

Much of the knowledge about the social contacts and peer groups of preschool children has been obtained from nursery school or laboratory settings. The recent emphasis on Head Start programs has produced research about the disadvantaged child in "poverty pockets" and large cities of the United States. Early childhood experiences of rural children have received little attention in child development literature. Yet, as Levinger and Murphy (1947) reported, there are certain important differences in child training between rural and urban children, and it is erroneous to assume that findings from research on city children also apply to farm children.

Researchers studying rural America are usually interested in social patterns. Research by Barker and Wright (1954) included the study of

the "psychological habitat" of children in a town of about 700 inhabitants designated as "Midwest U.S.A.". They identified a total of 2030 "behavior settings" that were open to some or all of the children, but they were mainly interested in the school age children. The activities of only two preschool children were included in the study.

Contacts with other children are important in the development of preschoolers, but there is limited knowledge about the social contacts of preschool children living in small towns and rural areas. The reviewer sought to contribute to this body of literature with a descriptive study of mothers' perceptions of social contacts of preschool children living in a small town or rural area.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURE

Subjects

The criteria for selection of mothers and children for study included; (1) residing in a small town or rural area (Unified School District #338, (2) having a child between $3\frac{1}{2}$ and $5\frac{1}{2}$ years of age who had no kindergarten experience. In cases where there was more than one child in this age range, the child nearest four years of age was selected for the study.

The investigator was a former resident of Unified School District #338 which included the small town of Valley Falls (Population 1237) and surrounding rural area. Through the cooperation of the elementary school principal, the names of sixty-four mothers with sixty-eight children between the ages of $3\frac{1}{2}$ and $5\frac{1}{2}$ were obtained from the school census. Three families had two children between $3\frac{1}{2}$ and $5\frac{1}{2}$ years of age so the child nearest four years of age was selected for study. Another family had five-year-old twin girls and their mother selected the one to include in the study. Mailing addresses were checked at the Valley Falls Post Office. Two families had recently moved out of the school district, thus sixty-two mothers and children were included in the study.

Instrument

A checksheet of thirty-seven questions was compiled by the author

using information from research reading, personal experience, and comments from mothers of preschool children. The checksheet covered general biographical information about the mother and her family and the social contacts of her preschool child. Questions concerning the mother's perception of her child's social contacts and her concern about these contacts were included. The third section was on community facilities available to the preschool child and the mother's interest in organized preschool groups.

The checksheet was pretested by two mothers of preschool children living in a neighboring school district. As a result, two questions were added and four questions were reworded to clarify meaning according to the suggestions and comments made by the mothers.

The revised checksheet (Appendix, page 46) and letter were mailed on April 6, 1968, to sixty-two mothers. The letter (Appendix, page 58) explained the study and asked for cooperation from the recipient. Stamped, self-addressed envelopes were included for returning the checksheet. A form (Appendix, page 59) to indicate interest in receiving a copy of the results of the study was included to be returned, if desired.

A code number was written on the checksheets in the upper right hand corner. As the checksheets were returned, the code number was checked against names (also code numbered) on the master list. This provided a record of mothers who had returned the checksheet and after two weeks postal card remainders were sent to the mothers who had not returned their checksheets.

By May 1, 1968, fifty-five checksheets (89 per cent) had been returned. One completed checksheet was unusable because the child was already attending kindergarten. Thirty-six mothers requested results of

of the study. Data from fifty-four checklists was coded and placed on IBM cards. Frequency counts and percentage distributions were obtained on the data.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Family and Community

Description of Mothers

The fifty-four mothers and children who participated in the study lived in Unified School District #338, which included the town of Valley Falls (Population 1237) and the surrounding rural agricultural area. Valley Falls, located in Northeast Kansas, is the largest town in Jefferson County but is only thirty miles from Topeka, the capital of the state. The main source of income is farming and related interests. Many residents commute to Topeka for work and recreation.

Twenty-four mothers lived in Valley Falls and thirty mothers lived from two to nine miles outside the town. The average distance from town was 4.9 miles.

The mothers had lived in their present homes an average of 5.3 years. The length of time varied from three months to fifteen years. Twelve mothers had lived ten or more years in their present home.

Fifty mothers were married and two were divorced. One child was being raised by her grandparents and another child, with her brother and sister, were living in a foster home.*

*The foster mother and grandmother are included with the mothers in the presentation of data unless stated otherwise. The foster father and grandfather are included with the fathers in the presentation of data unless stated otherwise. The divorced fathers are not included.

All except five of the mothers and eight husbands had completed high school. Only eight of the group had college degrees, although twenty-nine had attended college (Table 1). About one-fourth had received technical or vocational training.

TABLE 1

EDUCATION OF MOTHERS AND THEIR HUSBANDS

Grade Level Completed	Mothers		Husbands	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
7- 9 years	3	5.6	3	5.9
10-12 years	2	3.7	5	9.8
High School	35	66.7	27	52.9
Some College	12	22.2	9	17.6
College Degree	0	0.0	3	5.9
Graduate Degree	1	2.0	4	7.9
Total	53 ^a	100.0	51 ^b	100.0

^agrandmother not included

^btwo divorced husbands and grandfather not included

Only four mothers were employed full time. This included the two divorced mothers who indicated that they worked to earn the family living. Two of the mothers worked as typists in Topeka, one managed a store in Valley Falls and the fourth did secretarial work in Valley Falls.

Eight mothers worked part-time as secretaries or nurse aides at the nursing home in Valley Falls. Forty-two mothers (78 per cent) were full-time homemakers and did not work outside the home.

One-third of the fifty-two husbands were self-employed and 43 per cent worked for someone else. Twenty per cent of the husbands combined self-employment and working for someone else.

The fifty-two mothers (grandmother and foster mother not included) had a total of 192 children (Table 2), an average of 3.6 children per family. There were 101 boys and 91 girls. Although twenty-eight mothers had three or fewer children, one mother had thirteen children.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

Number of Children in Family	Number Families	Percentage	Total Number of Children
1	5	9.5	5
2	11	21.2	22
3	12	23.5	36
4	9	17.3	36
5	8	15.4	40
6	5	9.5	30
8	1	1.8	8
13	1	1.8	13
Total	52 ^a	100.0	192

^agrandmother and foster mother not included

In five families,² the child included in the study was the only child in the family (Table 3). In the families with two or more children, the preschool child was the youngest in 21 of the families and the oldest in 10 of the families. The ages of siblings ranged from two days to twenty years.

TABLE 3

ORDINAL POSITION OF PRESCHOOL CHILD STUDIED

Ordinal Position	Number Families	Percentage
Only Child	5	9.6
Oldest Child	10	19.3
Youngest Child	21	40.4
Middle Child	16	30.7
 Total	 52 ^a	 100.0

^agrandmother and foster mother not included

Description of Neighborhood

The mothers were asked to describe their neighborhood by telling how much territory they included when they thought of their neighborhood. Following this question, they were to estimate the number and ages of children in their neighborhood as they described it.

* grandmother and foster mother not included

Most of the mothers living in town thought of their neighborhood as including one or two blocks (Table 4). Most mothers living outside Valley Falls described their neighborhood in terms of miles (Table 4).

TABLE 4

MOTHERS' DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS

Mothers Living in Town		Mothers Living Outside Town	
Number	Description	Number	Description
9	1 block	5	near home
10	2 blocks	8	1-2 miles
3	4 blocks	9	3-5 miles
1	8 blocks	3	over 5 miles

The descriptions coded as "near home" included one mother who wrote "3 homes" and another; "immediate area." Two descriptions were, "the community where we reside," and "as far as I know people from my home." The fifth mother wrote, "We live on a farm, so just around the house."

One mother just wrote the word "ALL" and her description was unclassifiable. Four mothers living outside of town did not answer the question and one mother living in town did not answer.

The mothers were asked to estimate the number of children in each of three age ranges (0-2 years, 2-5 years, and 6-11 years of age) in their neighborhood. Over one-third of the mothers indicated that

most of the children in their neighborhoods were 6-11 years of age (Table 5). About one-fourth of the mothers said the greatest number of children were 2-5 years of age. Nine mothers wrote that they did not know the ages of children in their neighborhood and four mothers did not answer the question.

TABLE 5

AGE RANGE OF MAJORITY OF CHILDREN IN NEIGHBORHOOD

Majority of Children in Neighborhood are...	Number Mothers Reporting
6-11 years of age (older)	21
2 years of age or younger (younger)	2
2-5 years of age (same age)	13
Equal number older and younger children but less children of about same age	5
Did not know ages of children	9
No reply	4
Total	54

The forty-one mothers answering the question on ages of children in neighborhoods reported a total of 501 children eleven years old or younger. The number of children in a neighborhood ranged from 2 to 44, with an average of 13 children in a neighborhood.

The Preschool Child

Description of the Preschool Children

The study was designed to include children between 42 months and 66 months of age. The age and sex distribution of the fifty-four preschool children is given in Table 6.

TABLE 6

AGE AND SEX OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Age of Preschool Children	Sex of Preschool Children		
	Number Boys	Number Girls	Total
42-47 months	4	9	13
48-53 months	6	0	6
54-59 months	9	11	20
60-66 months	7	8	15
Total	26	28	54

Only two mothers described any physical limitations or health problems of their preschool children. One mother wrote that her child "could never have penicillan shots or it would be fatal." Another mother indicated that her child had asthma but that it only bothered him when he had a severe attack.

The Mother's Perception of Her Preschool Child's Playmates

The mother was asked to list the ages of her child's playmates. The number of playmates ranged from one to twenty-nine with an average of 5.5 playmates. Twenty-three mothers reported that most of their children's playmates were 2 to 5 years of age or about the same age as their children (Table 7). Seventeen of the mothers reported the most

TABLE 7

AGE RANGE OF MAJORITY OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S PLAYMATES

Majority of Playmates are...	Number Mothers Reporting
6-11 years of age (older)	17
2 years of age or younger (younger)	2
2-5 years of age (same age)	23
Equal number of older and same age children but fewer younger children	9
No reply	3
Total	54

playmates as 6-11 years of age. Nine mothers reported that their children played with an equal number of children between 2-5 and 6-11 years of age but had fewer playmates younger than 2 years of age. Three mothers did not answer the question.

Three mothers reported that their children had no playmates their own age and nine mothers reported no older playmates. In contrast, thirty-seven mothers reported that their children had no younger playmates (Table 8).

TABLE 8

NUMBER OF PLAYMATES OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN
AS REPORTED BY MOTHERS

Same Age as Child			Younger Than Child			Older Than Child		
Number Play- mates	Number Child- ren	Total	Number Play- mates	Number Child- ren	Total	Number Play- mates	Number Child- ren	Total
0	3	0	0	37	0	0	9	0
1	8	8	1	12	12	1	8	8
2	10	20	2	0	0	2	13	26
3	10	30	3	0	0	3	10	30
4	9	36	4	1	4	4	4	16
5	5	25	5	0	0	5	0	0
6	3	18	6	0	0	6	5	30
7 or more	2	14	7 or more	1	7	7 or more	1	7
Total	51	151		51	23		51	117

Twenty-eight mothers reported that their children had one to three playmates their own age; thirty-one reported one to three older playmates, and twelve mothers reported one to three younger playmates. A total of 291 playmates were reported for 51 children. Three mothers did not answer the question.

The mother was asked to check one statement which best described her involvement concerning her child playing with older children, younger children and children who were about the same age as her child. The five

statements concerning this involvement in relation to older children were:

There are no opportunities for my child to play with children who are older than he is.

I don't allow my child to play with children who are older than he is.

It's all right if my child plays with children who are older than he is.

I encourage my child to play with children who are older than he is.

I try to provide opportunities for my child to play with children who are older than he is.

The statements concerning younger children and children about the same age were the same except "younger" or "about the same age" were substituted for "older." The statement, "I encourage my child to play with children who are about the same age as he is," was inadvertently omitted on the final preparation of the checksheet.

Four mothers indicated that their children had no opportunities to play with children who were older; two mothers said there were no opportunities to play with younger children and three mothers said there were no opportunities for their children to play with children about their own age (Table 9). No mother said that she did not allow her child to play with any other children.

Forty-four mothers checked the statement that it was "all right" if their children played with older children and forty that it was "all right" if they played with younger children. Twenty-seven mothers checked the statement that it was "all right" if their children played with children about their own age.

Six mothers encouraged their children to play with older children or tried to provide opportunities for their children to play with older

TABLE 9

MOTHERS' INVOLVEMENT CONCERNING THEIR
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN PLAYING
WITH OTHER CHILDREN

Statement Checked	Mothers Reporting		
	...older	...younger	...about the same age
There are no opportunities for my child to play with children who are...	4	2	3
I don't allow my child to play with children who are...	0	0	0
It's all right if my child plays with children who are...	44	40	27
I encourage my child to play with children who are...	4	8	-
I try to provide opportunities for my child to play with children who are...	2	4	24
Total	54	54	54

children. Twelve or twice as many mothers encouraged their children to play with younger children or tried to provide opportunities for their children to play with younger children. In contrast, twenty-four mothers encouraged their children to play with children their own age or tried to provide opportunities for their children to play with children their own age.

The mother was asked how she felt, in general, about the contacts her preschool child had with other children and adults. Over 45 per cent

wished their children had more opportunities to be with other children (Table 10). Satisfaction with the number of social contacts their

TABLE 10

MOTHERS' FEELINGS ABOUT NUMBER OF SOCIAL
CONTACTS OF THEIR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Statement Checked	Mothers Reporting			
	...other children		...adults	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
I wish he had more opportunities to be with...	25	46.3	3	5.6
I am satisfied with the number of social contacts my child has with...	29	53.7	48	88.8
I think he is with (children/adults) too much	0	0.0	3	5.6
Total	54	100.0	54	100.0

children had with other children was expressed by 53.7 per cent. No mother felt that her child was with other children too much.

Although 5.6 per cent of the mothers wished their children had more opportunities to be with adults, 88.8 per cent were satisfied with the number of social contacts their children had with adults. The remaining 5.6 per cent thought their children were with adults too much.

To describe the time the preschool children spent with other children and adults, the mothers were asked to check a scale (from

1 to 7) to indicate from "Never" to "Very Frequently." The mothers reported that the preschool children were more "frequently" with older children and adults than with younger children or children their own age (Table 11). Twenty-six mothers reported that their children were

TABLE 11
TIME PRESCHOOL CHILDREN SPEND WITH
OTHER CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Who Child Spends Time With	Number Mothers Reporting			
	Almost Never (1,2)	Moderately (3,4,5)	Frequently (6,7)	No Reply
Child with older children	5	21	26	1
Child with younger children	14	21	17	2
Child with children his own age	7	29	15	3
Child with adults	2	27	24	1

with older children "frequently" and twenty-one mothers reported their children with older children "moderately." Fourteen mothers reported that their children were with younger children "almost never," but seventeen reported that their children were "frequently" with younger children.

Seven mothers reported their preschool children were "almost never" with children their own age. Forty-four mothers reported their children with children their own age "moderately" or "frequently." Fifty-one reported their children were with adults "moderately" or "frequently."

After the mothers indicated the time their preschool children spent with other children and adults, they were asked how concerned they were about the time their children spent with other children and adults. The mothers were asked to check a scale (from 1 to 7) to indicate their concern from "Not At All Concerned" to "Quite Concerned."

Concerning the time their children spent with older children, younger children and adults, over thirty mothers checked on the "not at all concerned" end of the scale (Table 12). Thirteen or more mothers

TABLE 12

CONCERN OF MOTHERS ABOUT THE TIME THEIR
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN SPEND WITH
OTHER CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Statement	Number Mothers Reporting			
	Not At All Concerned (1,2)	Moderately Concerned (3,4,5)	Quite Concerned (6,7)	No Reply
Concerning the amount of time my child spends with older children, I am	36	13	3	2
Concerning the amount of time my child spends with younger children, I am	35	13	4	2
Concerning the amount of time my child spends with children his own age, I am	29	18	6	1
Concerning the amount of time my child spends with adults, I am	34	14	4	2

were moderately concerned about the time their children spent with older children, younger children, and adults. Six were quite concerned about the time their children spent with children their own age and eighteen were moderately concerned.

Even though fourteen mothers reported that their preschool children were with younger children "almost never," the mothers were not as concerned about this as they were about the time spent with children their own age. There was a slight shift on the scale from "not at all concerned" to "quite concerned" by the mothers in noting their concern about time their children spent with children their own age as compared to their concern of the time their children spent with older and younger children or even adults.

Activities and Social Contacts of the Preschool Children

The mothers were asked to place a check in the appropriate column on the checksheet (most of the time, some of the time, very little time, or never) to describe how their preschool children spent their time outside. Fifty-three mothers described their children spending "most of the time" or "some of the time" playing with toys or equipment (Table 13). Forty-six mothers with two or more children reported that their preschool children played with brothers or sisters "most of the time" or "some of the time."

Thirty-six of the children spent "some of the time" playing alone, but twelve spent "very little time" playing alone. Thirty-three children spent "some of the time" playing with other children as compared to six who spent "most of the time" playing with other children. Most of the children spent "very little time" or "never" playing in a neighbor's yard.

TABLE 13

REPORTS OF MOTHERS ON OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES
OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Outside Activities	Total Number Reporting	Number Mothers Reporting			
		Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Very Lit- tle Time	Never
Plays alone	54	5	36	12	1
Plays with pet	51	2	30	14	5
Plays with toys or equipment	53	21	32	0	0
Plays with brother or sister	48	26	20	1	1
Plays or works with mother	54	2	36	15	1
Plays or works with father	52	3	30	19	0
Plays with other children	51	6	33	12	0
Plays in neighbor's yard	52	1	19	16	16

Thirty-eight of the children spent "most" or "some of the time" playing or working with their mothers and thirty-three spent "most" or "some of the time" playing or working with their fathers.

The mothers were also asked to describe how their preschool children spent their time inside the house. Most of the children spent "some of the time" doing all the activities listed (Table 14).

Eight children spent "most of the time" playing alone inside the house. Although thirty-nine children spent "some of the time" watching

TABLE 14

REPORTS OF MOTHERS ON INSIDE ACTIVITIES
OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Inside Activities	Total Number Reporting	Number Mothers Reporting			
		Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Very Lit- tle Time	Never
Plays alone	53	8	34	10	1
Watches television	53	1	39	12	1
Looks at books	54	1	48	5	0
Plays with toys or equipment	54	13	41	0	0
Plays with brother or sister	48	19	27	2	0
Plays or works with mother	54	1	43	10	0
Plays or works with father	52	2	29	21	0
Plays with other children	54	5	31	17	1
Plays at neighbor's house	53	0	18	21	14

television, twelve spent "very little time" watching television. Looking at books was an activity in which forty-eight children spent "some of the time."

Nineteen children spent "most of the time" playing with a brother or sister inside the house. More children spent "some of the time" playing or working with mother and father inside the house than they did outside. Eighteen children spent "some of the time" playing at a neighbor's

house. In contrast, thirty-five children spent "very little time" or "never" playing at a neighbor's house. Five children spent "most of the time" inside playing with other children, but eighteen spent "very little time" or "never" playing inside with other children.

The mothers were asked who their preschool children stayed with when they were not at home. They were to check the appropriate column (most of the time, some of the time, very little time, or never) to indicate how frequently their children stayed with the various people listed. Twelve children stayed "most of the time" with their fathers, and eleven stayed "most of the time" with relatives (Table 15).

TABLE 15

FREQUENCY WITH WHICH PRESCHOOL CHILDREN STAY
WITH VARIOUS PEOPLE WHEN MOTHERS
ARE AWAY FROM HOME

Who Child Stays With	Total Number Reporting	Number Mothers Reporting			
		Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Very Lit- tle Time	Never
Father	52	12	22	18	0
Brother or sister	48	7	7	8	26
Exchange with friend with children	52	3	18	19	12
Friend	50	1	15	24	10
Relative	54	11	23	13	7
Paid Sitter	54	6	16	13	19

Over twenty of the children spent "some of the time" staying with their fathers or relatives. A paid sitter had never been used by nineteen of the mothers. Twenty-six children had never stayed with a brother or sister.

The mothers were asked to check the appropriate column to indicate how often their children engaged in each of twenty-six listed activities. They were asked to check one of seven columns; (1) daily, (2) about 2 times a week, (3) weekly, (4) about 2 times a month, (5) monthly, (6) occasionally during the year, and (7) very seldom or never. The frequencies with which the children engaged in selected activities are summarized in Table 16.

Fourteen children daily visited neighbor children by themselves as compared with twenty-nine children who only occasionally visited neighbor children by themselves. Although twenty-seven children daily or weekly played with a group of children their own age, eighteen children only occasionally played with children their own age. Fourteen children attended Sunday School or church occasionally during the year, but thirty-three attended weekly.

About one-half of the children visited their grandparents or relatives at least weekly. The children worked or played with their mothers more often than with their fathers. All the children with siblings, except one, played daily with a brother or sister. Almost all of the children ate their meals with the family. About one-half of the families took their preschool child on a family outing at least once a month.

The mothers were asked how often they thought it was desirable to spend time with their children in various activities. About one-half of the mothers said it would be desirable to take their children to visit

TABLE 16

FREQUENCY OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S
SOCIAL CONTACTS

Type of Social Contact	Total Number Reporting	Number Mothers Reporting			
		Daily (1)	Weekly (2,3)	Monthly (4,5)	Occasionally (6,7)
Visits neighbor children by himself	54	14	13	8	29
Plays with group of children his own age	54	12	15	9	18
Attends Sunday School or church	54	0	33	7	14
Visits grandparents or relatives	54	7	21	16	10
Works or plays with mother	54	47	4	3	0
Works or plays with father	52	31	16	3	2
Works or plays with brother or sister	48	47	1	0	0
Eats meals with family	54	51	3	0	0
Goes on family outing	54	0	7	21	26

another child, or to a play area where other children played, weekly or more often. Most of the mothers felt it was desirable to spend time alone with their children daily, but only one-half of the mothers felt it was desirable for them to plan daily for their husbands to spend time alone with their children.

Community Facilities

Community Facilities for Preschool Children

Community recreational facilities in Valley Falls were listed and the mother was asked to indicate if her child used the facility. She was also asked to write any comments or suggestions concerning changes or improvements that could be made to make the facility more suited to her preschool child.

City Park--Twenty-eight mothers said their children used the city park and twenty-three reported their children did not use it. Comments on the city park were written by twenty-two mothers.

Thirteen commented that more playground equipment was needed for preschool children. One mother wrote, "There is very little playground equipment for the children and what is there is not very safe." Another commented, "The swings are too high for the little ones--there's just not much there."

Other comments concerned the need for the park to be cleaned up and fixed up. One mother wrote, "I hope we can keep the park a little cleaner this year."

Swimming Pool--The swimming pool was the most popular recreational facility for preschool children. Only four mothers checked that their children did not use the pool. One mother commented, "We use the pool everyday--just wish it was larger!" Another mother was glad that swimming lessons for preschool children were offered in the summer. The need for an attendant at the wading pool was expressed as one mother wrote that there always seemed to be older children or unruly ones (without parents around) in the small wading pool.

Public Library:--Only 40 per cent of the children used the public library. There were four written comments. One mother wrote that she tried to keep books at home. Another wrote that her child was "too young" to use the library. There was a suggestion for a "preschool readers round-up" or "story telling time" to interest the younger children in books.

Movie Theater:--Almost two-thirds of the children attended movies sometime at the theater. Most of the comments for improvements concerned showing more children or family movies. One mother wrote, "I wish they would show a few more shows for children or good family movies." Another mother said they could only go once a month if they were "lucky enough for the show to be suitable for children." Other comments concerned the lateness of the show's dismissal as there are no afternoon matinees. One mother thought movies on Saturday and Sunday afternoons would be attended by children.

School Playground:--One-half of the children had played at the school playground, usually with an older brother or sister. One mother wrote, "As yet we haven't made it, but are planning on going this year. The playground has a lot of play facilities." Another mother suggested that one age group could use the school playground or park for supervised play once or twice a week.

Organized Preschool Groups

The mothers were given the information that in many towns there were organized groups in which a preschool child could be with other children his own age. These groups could be part of a nursery school,

day care center, supervised play group, or Head Start program. The mothers were asked, "Would you be interested in your child being part of an organized preschool group in Valley Falls?"

If the mother was interested, she was asked to indicate which organized preschool group she would prefer her child to attend if such were available in Valley Falls. She was also asked if she would be willing to help with a play group or nursery school in Valley Falls.

Eighteen mothers were not interested in an organized group because their children would be attending kindergarten in the fall (Table 17). Although not interested, five mothers indicated their preference of

TABLE 17

MOTHERS' INTEREST IN AN ORGANIZED PRESCHOOL
GROUP IN VALLEY FALLS

Statement	Number Mothers	
	Responding to statement	Willing to help with nursery school or play group
Yes, I would be interested.	25	17
No, I would not be interested because I think my child should stay at home until kindergarten age.	7	2
No, I would not be interested because my child will attend kindergarten next fall.	18	4
No, I would not be interested because (give reason)...	4	0
Total	54	23

the listed organized groups. Three checked the Head Start program as first choice. One mother, who worked full time, favored the day care center. Another wrote, "If I were interested, it would be the play group."

Four mothers of kindergarten age children were willing to help with a play group or nursery school. One mother wrote, "I have another child that would benefit from these." Another mother was willing to help if she could do it while her child was at school as she liked to be home when he was home.

Seven mothers checked the statement, "No, I would not be interested because I think my child should stay at home until kindergarten age." But two of these mothers indicated they would be willing to help with a play group or nursery school in Valley Falls.

Four mothers were not interested in an organized preschool group and wrote their reasons. One answer was, "No, I would not be interested because my child has enough contacts without this." This family included six children, ages five to sixteen years. One mother wrote that transportation would be a problem and another added that there were too many trips to town already. Both of these families lived outside Valley Falls and had five children in the family. The mother of thirteen children was not interested as her preschooler had "enough brothers and sisters to play with and goes with his father quite often."

Twenty-five mothers checked the statement, "Yes, I would be interested." These twenty-five mothers were 74 per cent of the mothers whose children could attend an organized group because they would not be attending kindergarten in the fall. About one-third of these mothers favored a play group as their first preference of an organized group (Table 18).

TABLE 18

PREFERRED ORGANIZED GROUP OF 25 INTERESTED
MOTHERS WHOSE CHILDREN WOULD NOT ATTEND
KINDERGARTEN IN THE FALL

Organized Preschool Group	Number Mothers Reporting			
	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice
Play group	9	4	5	5
Nursery school	7	8	5	0
Day care center	1	2	4	10
Head Start program	8	3	3	2
No Reply	0	8	8	8
Total	25	25	25	25

Another one-third favored first the Head Start program and the remaining one-third preferred a nursery school. Only one mother in this group indicated the day care center as her first choice. Eight mothers gave only their first preferences for an organized preschool group.

Seventeen of the twenty-five mothers in this group were willing to help with a play group or nursery school in Valley Falls (Table 17). Seven mothers were not willing to help and one did not answer the question.

One of the written comments was; "Yes, I would be interested because there are not many children in our neighborhood and I feel it would be fun for her as well as good for her." Two mothers were willing to help if it was possible to get away from work on the farm. The

grandmother wanted to help if there was anything she could do such as caring for someone's baby so they could help with a play group.

One of the divorced mothers, explaining why she could not help, wrote; "I have to work full time to make my family's living." Another working mother wrote she could not help but would have liked to if she were not working.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The fifty-four mothers were about equally divided between town residents and rural residents. The 76 per cent of the mothers completing high school was considerably higher than the national percentage of 26.4 for rural nonfarm and 23.5 per cent of total farm females completing high school reported in the U.S. Census (1960). The 1.8 per cent of the mothers completing college was below the national percentage of 4.1 females completing college. This high percentage of high school graduates might indicate that students in this community are encouraged to complete high school but very few women attain a college education. It might also reflect that college women graduates from Valley Falls do not move back to their home town or farming community.

Only four mothers were employed full time and eight mothers worked part-time. This 8 per cent of the mothers employed full time compares with 45 per cent of the nation's women employed as reported in the U.S. Census (1960). There are not many jobs in Valley Falls open to women and most full-time employment is obtained in Topeka. The mothers may feel that they do not want to be away from their families the length of time it takes to commute and work in Topeka. The mothers who live on farms spend considerable time helping with the farming operation but are not considered "employed outside the home."

The fifty-two mothers^{*} had a total of 192 children, an average of

^{*}foster mother and grandmother not included

3.6 children per family. This is considerably greater than the 1.68 children per family in rural nonfarm areas and 1.75 children in rural farm areas according to the U.S. Census (1960). Without further research it would be difficult to explain the trend to larger families in this community as compared to the national average.

The investigator had not expected the large number of children reported by mothers as residing in neighborhoods with preschool children. Forty-one mothers reported a total of 501 children eleven years old or younger. The total number of playmates reported for fifty-one children was 291.

About one-half of the mothers reported that their children were with older children and adults frequently. About one-third of the mothers reported that their children were with younger children and with children about their own age frequently. Even though the preschool children had frequent social contacts with other children and a possible contact with a large number of children in their neighborhoods, almost one-half of the mothers wished that their children had more opportunities to be with other children. No mother thought her child was with other children too much.

In spite of the reported frequency of social contacts of preschool children, over 60 per cent of the mothers reported that their preschool children played with other children "very little time" or "never". This difference may indicate that many of the social contacts of the preschool children with other children were not part of play situations. Over 95 per cent of the mothers reported that their children spent "most of the time" or "some of the time" playing with toys and equipment or with a brother or sister.

The contacts with other children may not have been consistent or

regular but may have occurred spontaneously as the children would happen to meet. The contacts of rural children probably occurred when the mothers took their children to visit other children. It is unlikely that these contacts were unmonitored or at regular intervals. Without observation it is impossible to assess the impact of such social contacts.

Since the mothers tried to provide opportunities for their preschool children to play with children their own age and about one-half of the mothers were moderately or quite concerned about the time their preschool children spent with children their own age, it might be concluded that the mothers felt their preschool children did not spend enough time playing with children their own age. Over one-third of the preschool children played with children their own age only occasionally during the year. One-half of the preschool children played daily or weekly with children their own age. This difference could be attributed to the inclusion of both town and rural children in the study.

The preschool children studied had frequent contacts with adults. Almost all of the mothers were satisfied with their children's social contacts with adults and were not concerned about the time spent with adults. Contact with adults is important in the development of preschool children and should not be overlooked. It is probably desirable that these children were with adults during the preschool years as contact with adults will be more limited after the children start school and are with other children for considerable periods of time.

About one-fourth of 48 children spent very little time playing outside with children other than their siblings. (Six children did not have siblings.) The children spent even less time playing with children, other than siblings, inside the house. Most of the preschool children's activities placed him

in contact with his parents or siblings. They had limited contacts with other children.

When the mothers were away from home, the preschool children usually stayed with their fathers or relatives. It was interesting to note that 35 per cent of the mothers had "never" had a paid sitter for their children and that 24 per cent of the mothers left their children "very little time" with a paid sitter. About 60 per cent of the mothers had their children stay "some" or "most of the time" with relatives. This indicated that the families studied lived near relatives. This was also reflected in the fact that 26 children daily or weekly visited their grandparents or other relatives. As our population continues to become more mobile, this trend of living near relatives will slowly disappear. In this small town and rural area in Kansas, preschool children still have the opportunity to be near relatives.

About one-fourth of the preschool children daily visited neighbor children but over one-half of the children "very seldom" or "never" visited neighbor children by themselves. This difference probably indicated that the child living in town could walk by himself the short distance to a neighbor's house but the preschool child living in a rural area was not allowed to travel the distance to a neighbor's house by himself.

The social contacts of preschool children are influenced by the community facilities available to the child. Valley Falls is in the midst of change because of the Perry Dam and Reservoir construction. In some sections of town the buildings are being razed and in general, the town is participating in a community improvement project. The park and other community facilities can be improved to better meet the needs of preschool children. The investigator felt the comments of the mothers on the various

facilities could be helpful in planning future changes. These comments and suggestions will be presented to the committee promoting community improvements.

The mothers indicated that the swimming pool was the only community facility geared to preschool children. They said that the park had little play equipment, the library had very few books for preschool children and the theatre showed few movies suitable for families with young children.

There was definite interest shown by the mothers in organizing a preschool group in Valley Falls. Eighteen mothers had children who would be attending kindergarten in the fall and therefore would not be eligible to participate in an organized preschool group.

Of the 36 mothers whose children would be eligible, 25 mothers were interested in an organized preschool group. Seventeen of the interested mothers were willing to help with a play group or nursery school in Valley Falls. This interest indicates that a cooperative preschool group might be started by the mothers.

No majority of interested mothers favored any one type of organized preschool group. They were about equally divided among play group, nursery school and Head Start program. They definitely favored a half-day program and were not interested in a day care center. Their lack of interest in a day care center reflected the small percentage of mothers employed. From comments of mothers, they seemed more interested in increasing the social contacts of their children than they were in "babysitting" services or in other types of development.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

Contacts with other children are important in the development of preschool children. Child development research included little data on preschool children living in small towns and rural areas.

This study was designed to describe the social contacts of preschool children living in a small town and rural area. The specific objectives were to study (1) the social contacts of children between $3\frac{1}{2}$ and $5\frac{1}{2}$ years of age living in a small town and rural area, (2) the mother's perception of her child's social contacts, (3) the mother's concern about her child's social contacts, and (4) her interest in community facilities for her preschool child.

Mothers residing in a small town or rural area (Unified School District #338) and having a child between $3\frac{1}{2}$ and $5\frac{1}{2}$ years of age who had no kindergarten experience were mailed checksheets. The checksheet covered general biographical information about the mother and her family and the social contacts of her preschool child. Questions concerning the mother's perception of her child's social contacts and her concern about these contacts were also included. A third section was on community facilities available to the preschool child and the mother's interest in organized preschool groups.

Fifty-four mothers (89 per cent) completed and returned their checksheets. Twenty-four lived in town and thirty lived outside of town. Generally, the mothers of preschool children were living with

their husbands, had completed high school, were not employed and averaged 3.6 children.

Their neighborhoods, as described by the forty-one mothers, included 501 children, eleven years old or younger. Fifty-one mothers reported a total of 291 playmates for their preschool children.

Even though the children had contact with this large number of children, most of the activities of preschool children placed them in contact with their siblings and parents. In general, most of the mothers felt that their preschool children did not spend enough time with children their own age. Most of the mothers were satisfied with the amount of time their preschool children spent with adults and children who were older or younger.

The mothers indicated that there was need for more recreational facilities geared to preschool children. There was definite interest shown by the mothers in organizing a preschool group. Eighteen mothers had children who would be attending kindergarten in the fall and therefore would not be eligible to participate in an organized preschool group. Of the 36 mothers whose children would be eligible, 25 mothers were interested in a group and 17 of these mothers would be willing to help with a group. The interested mothers did not favor a group that would require all day participation by the children but did favor an organized group which would meet regularly for a half-day program.

Limitations of Study and Implications for Further Research

A mailed checksheet was used to obtain information. More complete information on the perceptions of the mothers and the playmates of preschool children might have been obtained through personal interviews.

By using a mailed checksheet, a larger number of mothers were reached. The entire population of mothers with children $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $5\frac{1}{2}$ years of age in the school district were included in the study and 89 per cent of the mothers completed and returned the checksheets.

The investigator decided not to provide a definition of neighborhood in the checksheet but rather to obtain information about how the mothers would describe their neighborhood. If a specific definition had been used for neighborhood, the checksheet information might have been different regarding the age and number of children in neighborhoods. The mother might have been asked to describe her neighborhood in relation to the size of the area her child covered alone or as she checked on him from her home. The number of children residing in this area would probably be quite different from the number of neighborhood children reported in this study.

This study provided preliminary information on the social contacts of preschool children but further research needs to be done on the circumstances in which contacts occur and the duration of the contacts. Also information concerning supervised play experiences as compared to unmonitored activities of the preschool child is needed. Most of the research on social contacts of preschool children has been done in nursery school settings or laboratory situations. More research is needed regarding the child's social contacts in his home and neighborhood environment.

This same type of checksheet information could be obtained from mothers living in a large city and then compared to the results of this study. The investigator feels that more study should be done on the recreational and educational facilities available to preschool children living in small towns and rural areas.

In general, more research is needed on people living in small towns and rural areas. There is a lack of information about family life and social contacts of small town and rural residents, regardless of age.

APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

SOCIAL CONTACTS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

CHECK SHEET

Instructions: This check sheet should be filled out by the mother.

Do not use any names to answer questions. All information will be confidential.

Use a check mark (.) to answer questions unless instructed otherwise on a specific question.

It is important that you answer all questions.

PART I - YOUR FAMILY AND NEIGHBORHOOD

1. Location of your home (check one):

In the town of Valley Falls

Outside the town of Valley Falls; _____ miles
number

2. How long have you lived in your present home?

_____ years
number

3. Marital status (Check one):

Married

Widowed

Divorced

Separated

4. Last grade level you completed (check one):

Less than 7 years

7 to 9 years

10 to 12 years

High School

Some College

College Degree

Graduate Degree

5. In addition to the above education, did you have any technical or vocational training? yes
 no

6. If so, describe: _____

7. Last grade level your husband completed (check one):

Less than 7 years

7 to 9 years

10 to 12 years

High School Graduate

Some College

College Degree

Graduate Degree

8. In addition to the above education, did your husband have any technical or vocational training? yes
 no

9. If so, describe: _____

10. Are you employed? (check one):

no

yes, 40 or more hours a week

yes, less than 40 hours a week

11. If you are employed, describe your work: _____

12. In connection with your employment, which hours are you away from home?

(give specific time) _____.

13. Your husband's work (check one):

self-employed

works for someone else

combination of the above two

not working

14. Describe your husband's occupation: _____

15. In connection with his work, which hours is your husband away from home?

(give specific time) _____.

16. Age and sex of your children:

	age	sex	check () if child is living away from home
1st child			
2nd child			
3rd child			
4th child			
5th child			
Other			

17. Number of people living in your home other than you, your husband, and children.

<input type="checkbox"/> none	age	relation to family
<input type="checkbox"/> relatives:	—	—————
<input type="checkbox"/> other people:	—	—————
	—	—————
	—	—————

18. How much territory do you include when you think of your neighborhood?

19. Indicate the number of children in each age range in your neighborhood.

number

0-2 years of age
 2-5 years of age
 6-11 years of age
 12-17 years of age

PART II - YOUR PRESCHOOL CHILD

Part II of this check sheet is about your preschool child between 3 1/2 and 5 1/2 years of age.

20. Date of birth sex
 month day year

21. Describe any physical limitations or health problems of your child:

22. List the ages of your child's playmates. (Brothers and sisters may be included)

<u>girls</u>	<u>boys</u>
age _____	age _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

23. Check one statement which best describes what you do about your child playing with older children.

There are no opportunities for my child to play with children who are older than he is.

I don't allow my child to play with children who are older than he is.

It's alright if my child plays with children who are older than he is.

I encourage my child to play with children who are older than he is.

I try to provide opportunities for my child to play with children who are older than he is.

24. Check one statement which best describes what you do about your child playing with younger children.

There are no opportunities for my child to play with children who are younger than he is.

I don't allow my child to play with children who are younger than he is.

It's alright if my child plays with children who are younger than he is.

I encourage my child to play with children who are younger than he is.

I try to provide opportunities for my child to play with children who are younger than he is.

25. Check one statement which best describes what you do about your child playing with children who are about the same age as your child.

- There are no opportunities for my child to play with children who are about the same age as he is.
- I don't allow my child to play with children who are about the same age as he is.
- It's alright if my child plays with children who are about the same age as he is.
- I try to provide opportunities for my child to play with children who are about the same age as he is.

26. In general, how do you feel about the contacts your child has with other children. (check one)

— I wish he had more opportunities to be with other children.

— I am satisfied with the number of social contacts my child has with other children.

I think he is with other children too much.

27. In general, how do you feel about contacts your child has with adults?
(check one)

I wish he had more opportunities to be with adults.

I am satisfied with the number of social contacts my child has with adults.

I think he is with adults too much.

28. Indicate the amount of time your child spends with other children and adults. (Check on scale (from 1-7) to indicate from Never to Very Frequently.)

Never	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Frequently
-------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----------------

- a. My child is with older children. _____
- b. My child is with younger children. _____
- c. My child is with children his own age. _____
- d. My child is with adults. _____

29. Indicate how concerned you are about the amount of time your child spends with other children and adults.

(Check on scale (from 1-7) to indicate your feelings from Not At All Concerned to Quite Concerned.)

Not at All							Quite	
Concerned	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Concerned

a. Concerning the amount of time my child spends with older children, I am _____

b. Concerning the amount of time my child spends with younger children, I am _____

c. Concerning the amount of time my child spends with children his own age, I am _____

d. Concerning the amount of time my child spends with adult, I am _____

For each part of questions 30, 31, 32, place a check in the appropriate column to describe how your preschool child spends his time.

	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very little time	Never
30. When your child plays <u>outside</u> , how does he spend his time?				
a. plays alone				
b. plays with pet				
c. plays with toys or equipment				
d. plays with brother or sister				
e. plays or works with mother				
f. plays or works with father				
g. plays with older children				
h. plays in neighbor's yard				
i. other (describe)				

	Most of the time	Some of the time	Very little time	Never
31. When your child plays inside how does he spend his time?				
a. plays alone				
b. watches television				
c. looks at books				
d. plays with toys or equipment				
e. plays with brother or sister				
f. Plays or works with mother				
g. plays or works with father				
h. plays with other children				
i. plays at neighbor's house				
j. other (describe)				
32. How often does your child stay with the following people when you are away from Home?				
a. father				
b. brother or sister				
c. exchange with friend with children				
d. friend				
e. relative				
f. paid sitter				
g. other (describe)				
33. Please feel free to write here any additional comments you wish to make regarding the social contacts of your child.				

34. Check in the appropriate column how often your child does each of the following activities.

	Daily	About 2 times a week	Weekly	About 2 times a month	Monthly	Occasionally during the year	Very seldom
a. Visits neighbor children by himself							
b. Plays with neighbor children at his own home.							
c. Plays with group of children about his own age.							
d. Attends Sunday School							
e. Visits other children overnight							
f. Attends or has party for children (birthday, holiday)							
g. Visits grandparents or other relatives							
h. Visits grandparents or other relatives overnight							
i. Attends family reunions or dinners							
j. Visits family friends							
k. Works or plays with mother							
l. Works or plays with father							
m. Goes shopping with mother							
n. Goes shopping with father							
o. Takes a walk with mother							
p. Takes a walk with father							
q. Plays with brother or sister							
r. Other activities with brother or sister (walks, shopping, etc.)							
s. Eats morning meal with family							
t. Eats noon meal with family							
u. Eats evening meal with family							
v. Eats out with family							
w. Goes on family outings (zoo, movie, etc.)							
x. Goes to club meeting with mother							

Daily	About 2 times a week	Weekly	About 2 times a month	Monthly	Occasionally during the year	55 Very Seldom or Never
-------	----------------------	--------	-----------------------	---------	------------------------------	----------------------------

y. Attends church services

z. Attends other church or social activities with parents

Please describe other activities that are important to your child

35. Check in the appropriate column how often you think the following are desirable.

a. Invite another child to play in home or yard

b. Take your child to visit another child

c. Take your child to play area where other children play

d. Watch television with your child

e. Read a book with your child

f. Have a party for your child

g. Take your child on a special trip or excursion

h. Spend time alone with your child

i. Plan for your husband to spend time along with your child

PART III - COMMUNITY FACILITIES

36. Listed below are some community recreation facilities in Valley Falls. Check if your child uses the facility and write comments suggesting changes or improvements that could be made so your preschool child would use it more.

Your comments on changes or improvements

a. City Park,

 yes no

b. Swimming Pool

 yes no

c. Public Library,

 yes no

d. Movie Theater,

 yes no

e. School Playground,

 yes no

f. Other (describe)

37. In many towns there are organized groups in which a preschool child can be with other children his own age. These groups may be part of a nursery school, day care center, supervised play group, or Head Start program.

a. Would you be interested in your child being part of an organized preschool group in Valley Falls?
(check one)

Yes, I would be interested.

No, I would not be interested because I think my child should stay at home until kindergarten age.

No, I would not be interested because my child will attend kindergarten next fall.

No, I would not be interested because (give reason) _____

b. If you are interested, which organized preschool group would you prefer your child to attend if it were available in Valley Falls?

(Indicate your preference by writing 1, 2, 3 for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices)

Play group
(one afternoon or morning a week)

Nursery School
(1/2 day, 3-5 days a week)

Day Care Center
(all day, 3-5 days a week)

Head Start Program
(1/2 day, 5 days a week)

c. Would you be willing to help with a play group or nursery school in Valley Falls?

yes

no

THANK - YOU



March 30, 1968

Dear Friend:

I am studying the social contacts of preschool children in and around Valley Falls. This research is part of my program of study leading to a Master's Degree in the Department of Family and Child Development at Kansas State University.

The school census list given me by Mr. Sherman Ashley, grade school principal, indicates that you have a preschool child between 3 and 1/2 and 5 and 1/2 years of age. Enclosed is a check sheet concerning the social contacts of your child and how you feel about these contacts. I would appreciate your interest and help in completing the check sheet.

The findings of this study will be used to help others better understand the preschool child living in a small town or rural area. The check sheets are identified only by number so you may be assured that your name will not be used in the report of the study. All information will be confidential.

I am a native of rural Valley Falls, so I have chosen this community for my study. Please take a few minutes to complete the check sheet. Return it to me at your earliest convenience in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Nancy Jo (Hamon) Fasse
Graduate Student, Department of
Family and Child Development

Approved by:

Marjorie Stith, Head
Department of Family and
Child Development
Kansas State University

If you would be interested in a summary of this study, please fill in your name and address and return this with your completed check sheet.

Name _____

Address _____

If you would be interested in a summary of this study, please fill in your name and address and return this with your completed check sheet.

Name _____

Address _____

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MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL CONTACTS OF
PRESCHOOL CHILDREN LIVING IN A
SMALL TOWN OR RURAL AREA

by

NANCY JO HAMON FASSE

B.S., Kansas State University, 1964

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1968

ABSTRACT

Contacts with other children are important in the development of preschool children. Child development research included little data on preschool children living in small towns and rural areas.

This study was designed to describe the social contacts of preschool children living in a small town and rural area. The specific objectives were to study (1) the social contacts of children between 3½ and 5½ years of age living in a small town and rural area, (2) the mother's perception of her child's social contacts, (3) the mother's concern about her child's social contacts, and (4) her interest in community facilities for her preschool child.

Mothers residing in a small town or rural area (Unified School District #338) and having a child between 3½ and 5½ years of age who had no kindergarten experience were mailed a checksheet. The checksheet covered general biographical information about the mother and her family and the social contacts of her preschool child. Questions concerning the mother's perception of her child's social contacts and her concern about these contacts were also included. A third section was on community facilities available to the preschool child and the mother's interest in organized preschool groups.

Fifty-four mothers (89 per cent) completed and returned their checksheets. Twenty-four lived in town and thirty lived outside of town. Generally, the mothers of preschool children were living with their husbands, had completed high school, were not employed and averaged 3.6 children.

Their neighborhoods, as described by the forty-one mothers, included 501 children, eleven years old or younger. Fifty-one mothers reported a total of 291 playmates for their preschool children.

Even though the children had contact with this large number of children, most of the activities of preschool children placed them in contact with their siblings and parents. In general, most of the mothers felt that their preschool children did not spend enough time with children their own age. Most of the mothers were satisfied with the amount of time their preschool children spent with adults and children who were older or younger.

The mothers indicated that there was need for more recreational facilities geared to preschool children. There was definite interest shown by the mothers in organizing a preschool group. Eighteen mothers had children who would be attending kindergarten in the fall and therefore would not be eligible to participate in an organized preschool group. Of the 36 mothers whose children would be eligible, 25 mothers were interested in a group and 17 of these mothers would be willing to help with a group. The interested mothers did not favor a group that would require all day participation by the children but did favor an organized group which would meet regularly for a half-day program.